

THE SCARLET TIGER: *CALLIMORPHA DOMINULA* (L.)  
IN THE COUNTY OF AVON

By BRYAN W. MOORE, F.R.E.S.\*

It is always a pleasure to record a new insect in an area, particularly if it is as exotic in appearance as the Scarlet Tiger, a daylight flying moth which certainly lives up to its generic name being of 'beautiful shape' and colour. I can imagine no more thrilling sight than that of this gorgeous moth flying over an area of its principal foodplant, *Symphytum officinale* (Comfrey) in full July sunshine, its crimson wings flashing in contrast to the blue and pink comfrey flowers.

This moth has recently been noted in a heavily wooded and marshy valley about 6 miles NE of Bath. The valley is deep and in the higher reaches planted with conifers and various deciduous trees. Many springs and small streams spread over the valley floor and here the ground is marshy, supporting willow and alder thickets, besides several acres of comfrey. This whole area is in a sense an 'island' as it is completely surrounded by farms and cultivated land, and there is no similar habitat for very many miles.

This moth was referred to me in 1980 by Mr. B. S. Harper of the Bristol Natural History Society, and I was able to confirm its identity, but despite careful enquiries I could not find any previous records. In 'Lepidoptera of Somerset' by Turner (1955), the author gives no modern records and says 'Probably now extinct in the County', and more recently Mr. John Heath of the Biological Records Centre kindly informs me that the Centre has no recent records for this area.

This colony appears to be a very small one and completely confined to the area which is marshy and abounds with comfrey. In April 1981 a search was made for larvae, and these (about 50) were seen feeding on the underside of the comfrey leaves on the sunny days. Like the imago the larvae seem to appreciate the sunshine and warmth because on cloudy or cold days they were nowhere to be seen. Later in June a pupa was found of reddish brown colour and lying in the debris at the foot of a comfrey plant. If this was in a typical position the pupa doubtless must suffer heavily from foraging birds and small mammals as they appear to be fairly easy to rake out of the surface debris.

I beat the first moth out of comfrey on 7th July 1981, and was surprised at its strong flight as it flashed into the air, a splash of crimson, suddenly to disappear as it closed its wings. A further moth was flushed out of a small bush on 9th July, again a powerful flyer, dipping over the comfrey eventually to disappear into a Poplar tree at the height of about 50 ft. On 14th July after much searching I found a moth sitting on the underside of a comfrey leaf, this I boxed as I wished to examine it closely and was sur-

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prised that it suddenly commenced to oviposit, the eggs having a hard smooth shell like small yellow pearls and being about .75 mm diameter.

According to 'The Moths & Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland' (Heath) Vo. 9, the female Scarlet Tiger flies over the food-plant, scattering the eggs willy nilly after the fashion I imagine of the Marbled White Butterfly, and this I can well accept after examining the eggs and noting their shape and hardness. It did occur to me however, that the female I boxed could have been ovipositing in the position in which I found her, and not whilst on the wing in the supposed manner.

Could she have been sitting on the edge of the comfrey leaf and depositing eggs into space where they would fall and roll to the ground at the base of the foodplant, or was she merely resting on the leaf or during an ovipositing flight?

It is hoped that it will be possible to strengthen the colony of this most attractive and interesting moth by adequate conservation both of foodplant and habitat.



THE SILVER-BARRED: DELTOTE BANKIANA F. AND OTHER INTERESTING LEPIDOPTERA IN EAST KENT IN 1981 — On the afternoon of 4th July, near Sandwich, I netted a moth which I thought at first was a Crambid. I was overjoyed to find it was a specimen of *Deltote bankiana* F. This was shortly followed by the finding of the Dotted Fanfoot: *Macrochilo cribrumalis* Hbn., a strong colony of the Rest Harrow: *Aplasta ononaria* Fuessly, and from the same tussock of grass, two Kent Black Arches: *Meganola albula* D. & S. That night, Mr. N. F. Heal operated an m.v. light there, and among some 60 different species of macrolepidoptera were the Starwort. *Cucullia asteris* D. & S., together with several more *D. bankiana* and *M. albula*. — T. W. HARMAN, Field Study Centre, Ex Broadoak Sub-Station, Broadoak Road, Canterbury, Kent. [From the time it was first noted in Kent in 1965, only four *bankiana* had until this year been recorded for the county. These specimens were suspected immigrants, but the occurrence now of the moth in numbers in a restricted area here strongly suggests the presence of a breeding colony. J. M. C-H.]

ADERUS POPULNEUS (PANZER) (COL.: ADERIDAE) ON SALLOW CATKINS IN MID-APRIL. — On April 16th, 1980 I beat a single ♂ *Aderus populneus* (Pz.) from male catkins of a *Salix* sp. growing in a hedge near Sycamore Farm, Witnesham, near Ipswich, Suffolk (TM 2051). The bushes were growing beside a main road and were overhung by quite mature oaks, some of which had rotten branches in their crowns. The latter had no doubt provided the developmental site for the beetle. Although I would expect to find adults of this species awaiting emergence within red-rotten wood etc. in early Spring, this is, in my experience an unusually early date for the species to be taken in the open. — DAVID R. NASH, 266 Colchester Road, Lawford, Essex CO11 2BU.